



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

East Riding of Yorkshire Council Fostering Service

**County Hall
Cross Street
Beverley
East Yorkshire
HU17 9BA**

Lead Inspector
Mr Michael McCleave

Key Announced Inspection
22nd January 2007 09:30

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Fostering Services*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	East Riding of Yorkshire Council Fostering Service
Address	County Hall Cross Street Beverley East Yorkshire HU17 9BA
Telephone number	01482 887700
Fax number	01482 936103
Email address	jane.stow@eastriding.gov.uk
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	David Glenville
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 9th January 2006

Brief Description of the Service:

The Fostering Service is run by the East Riding Of Yorkshire Council and is managed within the Social Service Directorate. The service is set up to provide foster care for children looked after by the Council. Foster carers are recruited and assessed by fostering social workers and are considered for approval by the Fostering Panel. Looked after children may also be placed with 'friend and family' carers who should also be assessed and approved. The Council's stated aim for the service is to help Foster Carers to provide care that ensures the safety and well-being of children and maximises their life chances by valuing diversity and promoting equality and achievement.

The East Riding Fostering Service is located a short distance from the town centre. The office itself is not suitable for disabled access and if required, an alternative venue can be arranged at the county offices nearby.

The scale of Boarding Out allowances paid to foster carers is as follows:

0-4 years - £114.87 per week.

5-10 years - £130.85

11-15 years - £162.89

16+ £198.11

SUMMARY

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

The data gathered to inform this inspection of the fostering service was based on interviews with:

The Acting Resource Manager, the Team Manager, the Senior Social Worker, the Fostering Team Social Workers, foster carers, young people, the Training Officer, the Independent Reviewing Officer, the Chair of The Children's Safeguarding Board, the Chair of the Foster Panel and the Team Manager of the Pathway team.

Questionnaires were received from, Childcare Social Workers, young people, foster carers and other professionals.

The Fostering Panel and Commissioning Panel were attended and the proceedings observed.

A meeting was held with a group of foster carers and a group of young people (separate meetings).

The service now has a permanent Team Manager and the position of Resource Manager will be appointed to in the near future. This will hopefully provide the service with stability and consistency in day to day management and strategic planning.

What the service does well:

The fostering service has a very good reputation among the foster carers and other professionals. Foster carers feel very well supported by their link foster social worker and some said:

"My link worker is fantastic, I only have to telephone and s/he is outside my front door"

"I feel that the fostering service values me"

"They will always listen to me if I have an issue to discuss"

The team are a committed and trained group who take pride in their work, and who are positively motivated to achieve better outcomes for the children that are placed with foster carers.

The training officer has in place a well developed training programme for the foster carers and staff. All foster carers are encouraged to complete NVQ Level 3, and this is paid for by the local authority. A training session was attended

and the foster carers said that they enjoyed coming together to share ideas and compare notes from their NVQ training.

The children's health records are clear and provide foster carers with all the information they need to ensure that the health care needs of the children in their care are met.

The Foster Carers Handbook has been updated and this continues to be an important source of information for foster carers.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The files have been re-structured to separate out children's and foster care information. This is now easier to navigate through, however more needs to be done to improve files.

The appointment of the team manager is a positive improvement in terms of providing the team with consistency. Strategic planning can now take place to develop the service to meet the current and future demands of children who need a family placement.

The Independent Reviewing Officer now has access to View Point and this means that up to date intelligence information about the views and opinions of the children can be analysed.

The Team Manager is developing links with the Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) in the region. In time this should be a forum for assisting in the strategic planning of available resources.

What they could do better:

Foster carers would welcome flexible training times to fit in with their work and domestic commitments. It is acknowledged however, that a new training officer is now in post and that this is noted.

The issue of foster carers being reimbursed speedily for expenses not covered by their allowances remains unresolved. This is managed by the childcare teams and foster carers are critical of the delays. This was an issue raised at the last inspection.

Foster carers would welcome more clarity in what they can spend by way of clothing when a child is placed with them. It seems that there is some variation between the children's social workers as to what amounts can be spent. Some foster carers said that they often have to negotiate with social workers on what is needed by the child and can find this embarrassing at times. They would prefer to have a transparent policy stating what are the limits they can spend up to.

The office accommodation needs to be reviewed. There is no space available for meetings, supervision sessions or privacy for confidential meetings with foster carers or other professionals. The floor in one upstairs office is uneven and a safety structural check is strongly advised. There is a real sense of overcrowding throughout the building.

The young people said that they would like to be given a brief profile of the foster family that they might be moving to so as to prepare them for the first meeting.

A quality assurance tool, such as a questionnaire, should be developed so as to periodically obtain the views of the foster carers and young people. This would provide valuable intelligence information for management and to assist in strategic planning of the service.

The young people would like to have access to the Internet from their foster homes. They felt strongly that they were disadvantaged by not being able to carry out research on the web for their school or college work.

Young people and foster carers would like to see developed a policy whereby the foster carers are delegated certain responsibilities such as signing school trips authorisations. A number of young people said that they had missed out due to delay in getting the authorisation from social workers; others said that there were times when they couldn't be bothered to seek social worker permission "because of the hassle".

Foster carers should receive training/guidance in periodic recording of what outcomes (Every Child Matters) have been achieved. This could be done quarterly and would provide the information for the young people's reviews. Foster carers spoken to were generally fine about writing summaries on outcomes.

Please contact the provider for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

CONTENTS

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

- The fostering service promotes the health and development of children.(NMS 12)

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

Children and young people in foster care have their health and development promoted very well.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

The service has a good record in ensuring that the children experience positive outcomes where their health is concerned. There is a Looked After Children's Health Group that comprises of representatives from Education, Health, Child Care Team Social Workers and their managers, the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and the Business Monitoring division.

Children's health care plans are prepared for all children who are placed by the fostering unit, and a selection of these were seen during the inspection. These plans detail how the child's health needs are to be addressed. Where necessary these plans will indicate relevant issues that arise out of the child's ethnicity, race, disability and family background.

The children who were spoken to had no complaints or concerns about how their health is met, and all were confident that their foster parents would make sure that they had appointments with their doctor if needed. It was clear from talking to the children and looking at their case records that good health outcomes could be demonstrated for the children who were in foster care. This was due to the diligence of the foster carers. If any child needed specialist health resources then the fostering link workers would make sure that relevant training was provided for the carers.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- Any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable. (NMS 3)
- The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.(NMS 6)
- The service matches children to carers appropriately.(NMS 8)
- The fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect.(NMS 9)
- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people.(NMS 15)
- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively.(NMS 30)

The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following Standard(s):

3, 6, 8, 9, 15, 30.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

Children and young people in foster care are kept safe from abuse and neglect and they are protected by the systems in place.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

The managers and the team of fostering social workers (Link Workers) are well trained and most are very experienced with a number of years in this specialist role. As employees of the council all the staff have been subject to Criminal Record Bureau checks and it is policy that no one is permitted to commence work in the service until all checks have been completed.

All the foster carers approved by the panel have been thoroughly checked by the service and case files examined, had evidence of the checks carried out. The process of assessing potential foster carers is a detailed exercise, and staff spoken to, were clear that counselling out unsuitable applicants was an important part of their duties. It was clear from discussions with fostering social workers and carers, that the safety of the children was regarded as a

paramount duty and responsibility, and certainly the children who were spoken to, said that they felt safe living with their carers. All the foster carers who were spoken to said that they had attended child protection awareness training. They were able to demonstrate a good understanding of their responsibilities in respect of the children in their care. None of the children reported that they were being bullied. All children who become fostered by the local authority are given a very useful booklet titled "My Book on Fostering" which had been developed by the children's participation group. This has information on the various people or organisations that can be contacted if the children have any concerns.

It is clear from the information in case files, that matching of children to suitable foster carers is carried out, and this was confirmed by carers.

The foster panel is managed by an independent chair who provides good leadership. The panel considers all applications from people who wish to become foster carers, and also receives requests for information relating to exemptions and extensions. An important role of the panel is the ability to maintain independent scrutiny of the fostering service and to challenge where relevant any concerns about the quality of information presented, and practice of the team. All the panel members have been subject to the required checks and have received training. A recent training day was judged a success.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service values diversity.(NMS 7)
- The fostering service promotes educational achievement.(NMS 13)
- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.(NMS 31)

The Commission considers Standards 7, 13 and 31 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

7, 13, 31.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

The service promotes the racial, religious and cultural identity of children as far as practicable, and gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of children and young people to help them to achieve their potential.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

Diversity is valued and children and their families have access to a care service that recognises needs in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability and sexuality. This indicates a service that is fair in dealing with people.

The education of the children is supported by foster carers who take their responsibilities seriously. All the foster carers that were spoken to said that they attend relevant school meetings and liaise with teachers. The service has in place a Strategic Education Group that monitors and deals with educational issues. Another forum known as the Looked After Education Project Plan Group meets every six weeks that has two dedicated LAC programme workers, Child Care Team Managers, fostering social workers, the Independent Reviewing Officer, Pathway Team social worker and School Home Support. This group reviews educational issues on a case by case basis where specific

difficulties have been identified. An issue that this group needs to consider is the delay experienced by some children in obtaining consent to go on school trips or other activities. Foster carers said that these consents are passed to the childcare team social workers, and examples were given when the consent was returned but too late. One young person said "I don't bother giving my social worker consent forms it's a waste of time so I don't go on trips now". This is clearly not satisfactory.

The children confirmed that their carers were very supportive in helping them to do well at school however, some said they did feel at a disadvantage in not being able to use the internet to carry out homework research as this facility had recently been withdrawn. Where foster carers had purchased their own computers the young people were able to use these. Consideration could be given, to a contribution being paid towards the Internet subscription by the authority.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person. (NMS 10)
- The fostering service promotes consultation.(NMS 11)

The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

10, 11.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

The foster agency actively promotes and supports contacts with family and friends thereby ensuring links are maintained. Children and young people are listened to and their views respected.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

Maintaining and developing family contacts and friendships is supported by the fostering service and this is emphasised through training sessions for foster carers. Foster carers generally welcomed being involved in contact arrangements if this was appropriate. However, some felt that they were often put under pressure by the child's social worker to supervise contact arrangements especially during weekends. These carers wanted to have the option of whether to be involved or not. This issue needs addressing by the childcare managers.

The views and opinions of the children are valued and these are sought prior to statutory reviews and planning meetings. The authority has a web site known as Viewpoint and this enables the children and young people to put their thoughts about their care on a template that can then be electronically sent to the Independent Reviewing Officer. The children are encouraged to join the Participation Group where they can discuss issues and this is passed back to

the fostering team manager or other appropriate manager to take up on their behalf.

All children and young people are given a guide at the time of placement and this is a useful publication that gives information about what they can expect from being in foster care and how to make a complaint. It is set out in user a friendly format and includes useful contact details. Young people said that they found the CSCI questionnaire helpful; the manager of the fostering service should consider developing a similar one to periodically seek the views of the children as this could provide valuable information to assist in improving the service.

The young people said they would find it helpful if a profile of the family they were being matched was given to them, so that they could have an idea of the family before they met up. This would be good practice.

The management of the foster service are intending to increase the participation of young people in the planning and delivery of the service. This is an area that will be explored with the children's participation project.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.(NMS 14)
- The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.(NMS 29)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

14, 29.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

Children live in comfortable homes that support and encourage them towards independence.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

When young people reach the age of sixteen, they are allocated a social worker from the Pathway Team who takes responsibility for all planning thereafter, leading to the young person eventually moving into independent living or further education. The support provided by this team is highly regarded by young people who feel that they can rely on their social worker to make sure that they are prepared for the time when they leave the security of their foster home. This team has a number of informative booklets that is given to the young people outlining their rights and contains very good information about independent living, work, benefits and accommodation. The Pathway Plan is put together with the full involvement of the young person and as this is updated it has to be with their agreement. This is good practice and indicates that the young people are listened to.

The allowances paid to foster carers is generally regarded by them as appropriate, that enables carers to support the children to participate in the community through access to transport. However, the issue raised at the last inspection about the delay in expenses being paid, remains a concern for foster carers who feel unhappy about having to pursue payment in a number of

cases. This budget is not administered by the foster service. This needs to be reviewed.

Some foster carers said that they were often unclear about how much they could spend on children's clothing. It seems that there is some variation between the child's social workers from the child-care teams on what can be spent. Some foster carers said that they often had to negotiate with social workers when a child was initially placed with them, and found this embarrassing. They would prefer to have a policy stating clearly what limits they can go to with initial placements. Foster carers would therefore be given more responsibility to decide with the young person what they required.

Management

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.(NMS 1)
- The fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience. (NMS 2)
- The fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified. (NMS 4)
- The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.(NMS 5)
- Staff are organised and managed effectively.(NMS 16)
- The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff.(NMS 17)
- The fostering service is a fair and competent employer.(NMS 18)
- There is a good quality training programme. (NMS 19)
- All staff are properly accountable and supported.(NMS 20)
- The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.(NMS 21)
- Foster carers are provided with supervision and support.(NMS 22)
- Foster carers are appropriately trained.(NMS 23)
- Case records for children are comprehensive.(NMS 24)
- The administrative records are maintained as required.(NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.(NMS 26)
- The fostering service is financially viable. (NMS 27)
- The fostering service has robust financial processes. (NMS 28)
- Local Authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers.(NMS 32)

The Commission considers Standards 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

1, 2, 5, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 32.

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

The fostering service is well managed.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

The statement of purpose clearly sets out the services provided. A children's guide is provided to all children who are fostered. This document is clear and in a format that enables the children to understand what they can expect from being fostered.

The fostering service is managed by the Team Manager who has been in post approximately 10 months, and the Resources Manager is currently in post on a temporary basis. Both are experienced managers, and are seen by staff and foster carers as approachable and willing to listen. This is good management practice. The continuity and good practice has been maintained by the senior social worker during this period of change. The management team work well as a group.

The fostering team are an enthusiastic group who have a positive commitment to supporting the foster carers and to ensure that the service meets the needs of the children.

Training for staff and foster carers is well established, and a robust programme is in place, administered by a training officer who manages all foster training. Foster carers are encouraged and supported to register for the NVQ Level 3 training in the Care of Children and Young People. This is good practice. During the inspection a training session took place for foster carers working on their portfolios for NVQ. This was well attended and the carers clearly enjoyed the session. The training officer should however, consider organising some flexible training sessions for those carers who work unsocial hours.

There is a commitment to regular structured supervision for staff, and the team manager is planning to introduce this for foster carers. Staff feel supported by their managers and they are encouraged to develop their skills and knowledge through regular training. Very good links are maintained with the training officer who is currently updating a database to cover all foster staff and carers.

The records kept at the office contain all the relevant significant information and these were found to be in good order. Some files were very bulky with records going back a number of years; therefore the manager should consider removing these and keep on file records for twelve months. Foster carers should be encouraged to record at periodic intervals the outcomes achieved (Every Child Matters), and this information would provide important information for reviews.

The office accommodation is not ideal due to the lack of rooms for private meetings. All available space is used to accommodate staff and so any private

meetings have to take place in other council owned buildings in Beverley. In fairness to the authority, more suitable alternative offices were offered in Goole but staff chose to stay in Beverley, which is more central for their operations. Nevertheless, the present office is not ideal and a review of accommodation should continue. The uneven floor in team room needs to be examined by a structural engineer to check on safety.

A dedicated foster link worker supervises kinship carers. The carers that were spoken to during the inspection, spoke positively about the high quality support they received and value this service. Relatives play a valuable role in caring for the children of their families and the fostering service is commended for the work in this area.

In view of the short time that the Acting Resource Manager and Team Manager have been in post, the service is managed well and the team are being appropriately supervised.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services have been met and uses the following scale.

4 Standard Exceeded (Commendable) **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls) **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

"N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	3

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	3
8	3
9	3
15	3
30	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	3
13	3
31	3

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	3
11	3

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	3
29	3

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	3
2	3
4	X
5	3
16	3
17	3
18	X
19	3
20	3
21	3
22	3
23	3
24	3
25	3
26	2
27	X
28	X
32	4

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations relate to National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the Registered Provider/s to consider carrying out.

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1.	FS11	Profiles of foster families should be developed and given to young people prior to matching or introductions.
2.	FS11	A questionnaire for young people should be developed to seek their views on foster care.
3.	FS13	Consideration should be given to improving the system for giving consents.
4.	FS26	The office accommodation should be kept under review.
5.	FS29	A review of how agreed expenses are paid needs to be carried out.

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